

Off-center dollar bills: Are they winners or are they worthless?

By Roger Boye

Here are answers to more questions about coins and currency:

Q—I have two bills printed off-center with wider-than-normal margins on the left side and no margins on the opposite side. Any value to collectors?—V.C., Chicago.

A—At best your unusual items are worth just a little more than face value in the hobby market.

Federal Reserve notes are printed on large sheets of paper, 32 to the sheet. Error collectors prefer to own bills with designs so far off-center that the edge of an adjoining bill is visible. Your money doesn't have the "extra edge" and thus isn't "in demand."

Quite possibly, a Chicago bank has just released a batch of off-center bucks, judging by the number of similar questions I received in late September.

Q—in your Sept. 26 column, you stated that grooves around the edges of dimes and quarters "serve no practical purpose" in modern-day America since the government no longer uses silver or gold in circulating coinage. On the contrary, the grooves serve a very practical purpose for the blind: making coins easier to identify by touch. Grooves are especially important in telling the difference between a penny and a dime, a nickel and quarter.

Now if only the government would make the

Susan B. Anthony dollar a [multi]sided coin. If the sighted have such problems distinguishing Susie B's from quarters, can you imagine what it is like for the blind? Perhaps we should write letters to the Treasury. Do I have any support?—E.J., Evanston.

A—Thank you for your incisive comments. Two important persons to write to would be Mrs. Donna Pope, director of the U.S. Mint [Department of the Treasury, Washington, D.C. 20220], or U.S. Rep. Frank Annunzio [D., Ill.], chairman of the House Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs and Coinage [Room 2303, Rayburn Building, Washington, D.C. 20515].

But don't expect quick results. Uncle Sam last made Anthony dollars for circulation in 1980; with millions of the coins in storage, chances for future production—even of a noncircular coin—are nil.

Q—For the last several years, I've owned a \$20 bill that has an unusual misprint. When the bill lies flat, it looks normal; but when I pull at both ends, two white streaks are exposed—areas where there's no printing, just blank space. Is it worth anything?—R.K., Bellwood.

A—Government machines produced your bill on paper that developed folds before it entered the printing press. When you smooth out the paper—in effect, take out the folds—the blank streaks are exposed. Inspectors are supposed to destroy poorly printed money, but some of it still gets into circulation.

Most likely, the retail value of your bill would range from \$30 to \$60, depending on its condition and the length, width and slope of the streaks. Wide streaks running at an angle are less common than narrow streaks running vertically.